

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
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AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 0924

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CS
SUBJ: ROBERT VESCO APPLIES FOR COSTA RICAN CITIZENSHIP

1. ROBERT VESCO'S LAWYER INITIATED VESCO'S CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS BEFORE THE COSTA RICAN CIVIL REGISTRY ON FEB 23. LISTED AS CHARACTER REFERENCES IN VESCO'S APPLICATION WERE EX-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGURES, VESCO'S GARDENER, HIS CHAUFFER, AND LOCAL PILOT PAT HATCH. THE APPLICATION SAYS VESCO IS AN ITALIAN CITIZEN AND HAS NEVER BEEN CONVICTED OF ANY CRIME.

2. ACCORDING TO COSTA RICAN LAW, THERE IS A TEN WORKING DAY PERIOD FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE APPLICATION REQUEST DURING WHICH TIME ANY COSTA RICAN CITIZEN WHO OPPOSES IT CAN MAKE DEPOSITIONS IN THE CIVIL REGISTRY TO THIS EFFECT. DURING THIS SAME PERIOD CITIZENS WHO SUPPORT THE REQUEST ALSO GIVE THEIR DEPOSITIONS. THE DIRECTOR OF THE CIVIL REGISTRY AND THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATURALIZATION OFFICE (A PART OF THE REGISTRY) MUST JOINTLY SIGN OFF ON APPROVAL OR REJECTION OF THE APPLICATION. THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL REVIEWS THE FINDINGS OF THE REGISTRY. ADDITIONALLY, ANY CITIZEN CAN INDEPENDENTLY REQUEST THE TRIBUNAL TO REVIEW THE DECISION OF THE REGISTRY, AND CAN PRESENT ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE. THE DECISION OF THE TRIBUNAL
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CANNOT BE APPEALED.

3. SOURCES CLOSE TO PRESIDENT-ELECT CARAZO HAVE TOLD EMBASSY THAT CARAZO WILL CALL OPENLY UPON COSTA RICANS TO OPPOSE THE VESCO CITIZENSHIP REQUEST. A PUBLIC MEETING WILL BE HELD FEB 27 TO ORGANIZE A CAMPAIGN AGAINST IT. PLANNED ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE INDIVIDUAL CITIZEN DECLARATIONS AT THE CIVIL REGISTRY. THOSE

OPPOSED TO VESCO CITIZENSHIP EXPECT THAT HUNDREDS OF COSTA RICANS WILL SO DEPOSE, AND THUS ATTEMPT TO DRAW OUT THE DECISION MAKING PERIOD IN THIS CASE BEYOND THE MAY 8 INAUGURATION DAY. ADDITIONALLY, ANTI-VESCO LAWYERS ARE PREPARING LEGAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE REGISTRY.

4. OPPOSITION DEPUTIES WILL ATTEMPT TO PASS BY TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY SESSION OF FEB 27 A "SENSE OF THE ASSEMBLY" RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION TO VESCO'S CITIZENSHIP REQUEST FOR PRESENTATION TO THE CIVIL REGISTRY AND THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL. BY ITSELF, THE OPPOSITION DOES NOT HAVE THE TWO-THIRDS VOTE. KEY TO PASSAGE OF THIS RESOLUTION WILL BE THE VOTE OF NATIONAL LIBERATION DEPUTIES WHO IN TURN, AT LEAST IN THEORY, WILL BE GUIDED BY PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER AND DEFEATED PLN CANDIDATE LUIS ALBERTO MONGE.

5. COMMENT: MOST OBSERVERS OPINE THAT VESCO IS PLAYING THE CITIZENSHIP CARD NOW BECAUSE OF HIS FEAR RE NEAR FUTURE CARAZO GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AGAINST HIM. HENCE VESCO'S DECISION IS LIKELY BASED ON HIS PERCEIVED NEED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE, WHILE HE STILL CAN, OF THE BENIGN VESCO POLICY OF THE ODUBER GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS PERMITTED VESCO TO MAINTAIN HIS SAFE HAVEN STATUS IN COSTA RICA. COSTA RICA IS GEARING UP FOR YET ANOTHER VESCO BATTLE.
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